

## Powys Notes

the semiannual journal and newsletter of the  
Powys Society of North America

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### The Powys Society of North America

Founded in December, 1983, the Powys Society of North America seeks to promote the study and appreciation of the literary works of the Powys family, especially those of John Cowper Powys (1872-1963), T. F. Powys (1875-1953), and Llewelyn Powys (1884-1939).

The Society takes a special interest in the North American connections and experiences of the Powyses, and encourages the exploration of the extensive collections of Powys material in North America and the involvement, particularly of John Cowper and Llewelyn, in American literary culture.

*Powys Notes*, the Society's publication, appears in Spring and Fall issues and presents scholarship, reviews, and bibliography of Powys interest. Submissions may be addressed to the Editor. IBM or Mac compatible discs with accompanying printed copy are welcome.

MICHAEL BALLIN

*Porius* completes a working out of Powys's mature exploration of the prevalent themes and concerns of his fiction: the nature of consciousness, the nature of the past and the relations of men and women. The evocation of an obscure historical period forces the reader to confront the familiar within the context of the unfamiliar; *Porius* is a history of a specific political crisis in British history--the Germanic invasion of the fifth century and the consequent threat of destruction of classical Roman civilised values--in terms of its impact upon the personal and collective psyche. The characters are all intensely inward looking; Porius, for example "cavoseniargises," a psychological state when "the gulf between the animal consciousness on his body . . . and the consciousness of his restless soul found itself able to follow every curve and ripple of his bodily sensations and yet remain suspended above them".<sup>1</sup> Most war heroes with a giant physique are not presented with such intense self consciousness, especially in a primitive epic world. Powys interestingly presents the fifth century as a predominantly female rather than a male world. The reader is told that Porius was brought up by women and that he reacts against "all the femininity that had so long enslaved him" (106). The female characters participate in the action more strongly and more individualistically than do the men. Morfydd and Euronwy are forceful in different ways and play a crucial role in both the personal and political levels of the action. The novel dramatises the death of a matriarchy, (the "Three Aunties"); the men seem weaker, vulnerable, at times even infantile when they are not pathological or destructive like Medrawd or Minnawc Gorsant. Even Myrddin Wyllt is femininely passive in the arms of Porius and all but enslaved by Nincue who is described at one point as "a yielding image of femininity in the abstract" (93).

*Porius* recognises explicitly the force of the feminine consciousness in a way which blends ancient historical and modernist perspectives. The narrative voice is often that of a feminist narrator dedicated to the rendition of inward consciousness and sensitive to interior moods and feelings at the expense of outer action. I wish to argue that *Porius* is partly dedicated to the recognition of the feminine consciousness and to the working out of the significance of that consciousness in terms of history and myth.

The historical level of the narrative opposes the values of matriarchal peace to the specifically male values of destruction through war. This opposition is dramatised in the context of a specific historic crisis, the Germanic invasion of Britain in 499 A.D., which has a prophetic relationship to the twentieth century period before World War II when Powys feared the invasion of Britain.

The backwards and forwards reach of *Porius* through Time and Space places the action in the larger, universal framework of Spenglerian historic cycles. The characters in the novel rise to this dimension; for example,

when Morfydd and Rhun make love in the chapter "House of Stone," they arrive at a Donne-like consciousness in which "a new and opposed world had rushed into this particular oasis of time and space, where it confronted the one that was already in possession" (457). This miraculous birth is part of a process which Powys identifies as the "ancient play of creation, amalgamation and destruction" (457). The human, sexual process involves such opposites as night and day, sunlight and moonlight, sound and silence, birth and death. If the inwardness of *Porius* recalls the fictional worlds of Virginia Woolf or Dorothy Richardson its cosmic and anthropological primitivism recalls the world of D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*.

*Porius* presents a new emphasis upon feminist assertion with the intent of formulating a new philosophy of love based upon the integrity of the individual self. The problems of power and dominance have to be solved and in working towards his solution Powys presents the power impulse in both Male and Female but tries to seek ways to neutralise it. I relate the feminine in *Porius* to a particular kind of introspection which is recurrent in Powys's fiction. Glen Cavaliero once commented that *Wolf Solent*, for example, is one of the most introspective characters in modern fiction. *A Glastonbury Romance* changes the concentration upon the Jamesian single point of view for the method that Charles Locke has described as "polyphonic".<sup>2</sup> The two Welsh historical novels seem to combine a polyphonic narrative structure with the presence of two powerfully introspective consciousness, Owen Glendower and Porius. *Porius* reflects Powys's interest in the world of inner consciousness, an emphasis which women writers of the modern period have been chiefly responsible for creating. Sidney Janet Kaplan's *Feminine Consciousness in the Modern British Novel* asserts that women writers have contributed most to the novel of Consciousness and have conducted a quest for the distinctive nature of feminine consciousness.<sup>3</sup> The distinctiveness implies a notion of a separate and different quality of consciousness in men and women.

There are two essays by Powys as well as the text of *Porius* which support the view that Powys had a special appreciation for a feminist view of consciousness. In his 1931 monograph on Dorothy Richardson<sup>4</sup> Powys presents a writer who explores "the abyss of the feminine subconscious" (18). From her "feminine attitude to life" Dorothy Richardson has made "the vantage ground for interpreting life." Feminine consciousness is thus deeper and contains a clue to the most basic understanding of reality. Powys finds "a presence in the feminine sensibility of something almost Rabelaisian in its unfastidiousness," the acceptance of "the mystery of what is" (33). The comic claims that "this woman is a Pythian soothsayer" perhaps reflects Powys's instinctive recognition of the basic religious mystery of feminine perception. Finally, Powys asserts that "All authentic human genius is in some degree bisexual despite the abysmal difference between the soul of man and the soul of woman" (87). This theme is reflected in *Porius* when after the encounter with the female Gawres, Porius perceives through her eyes "the primal mystery of the differing

consciousness of male and female" which "strikes his whole organism" (513).

Powys's essay on Emily Bronte published in *Suspended Judgments*<sup>5</sup> testifies also to the creativity of the feminine consciousness in fiction and romance. Again the essay speaks to the power of the feminine in general as much as its specific embodiment in Emily Bronte. Moreover when Powys praises Bronte's "undying resistance to all that would undermine [her] integral identity," admires the manner with which she faces the "jagged edges of the crushing wheel of destiny" and "endures tragedy without flinching," I am forcibly reminded of characters like Euronwy, Morfydd or even the Modrybedd in *Porius*. If it is true, as Powys asserts, that Emily Bronte "contained something . . . inhuman, eternal and universal . . . outside the power of time and space," this transcendent quality resides in the eternal feminine of which Bronte is a reincarnation. Finally, Powys draws one significant conclusion from his reading of Bronte's novels: that "we can escape and hide from ourselves only now and again." Powys experiences in reading Bronte "some sudden devastating flash" which displays "the real lineaments of what we are . . ." Thus Powys proclaims that the essential Self is more important than any theory or principle. This assertion clarifies the nature of Powys's quest into the feminine: it is a search for the existential reality of the self in men and women.

The inner intensity which Powys tries to achieve for his central characters in *Porius* is developed as a response to a situation of crisis which involves the death of an existing cultural order; it is this response which forces the characters into themselves to produce an extra level of consciousness of self. The nature of the crisis is itself a catalyst for energising the sexes, for sex and gender are both woven inextricably into the crisis. The women adopt saviour roles in a destructive war threatened by men. Against the background of the military struggle is the primitive celebration by the forest peoples of the rites of the Fisher King which inspire "a rushing together of the sexes."

Morfydd and Euronwy are the strongest examples in the earlier sections of the novel of this response of the feminine to this initial situation. In Chapter XI, "Morfydd", the two women amaze each other by their respective responses to the crisis. Euronwy is not presented as a ideal of womanhood, distorted as her personality is by a spirit of fanaticism reinforced by her devotion to the priest Minnawc Gorsant. Powys does not sentimentalise his women but he does compel admiration from the reader by his dramatisation of the inner depths and spiritual force of his female characters. Euronwy buries her hostility to Morfydd and suggests that they join forces to aid the endangered House of Cunedda:

You and I together child, you and I with one mind  
and one purpose--I tell you it is we, and we only--  
for my son will listen to us both who can save this  
house--and save *him* with it! (189)

Morfydd agrees to undertake a political marriage in order to create harmony between the Roman and aboriginal peoples. The women, more than the men, seem capable of submerging the ego in the service of the greater good. Morfydd astonishes Euronwy by proposing that they exchange a vow on the things they hold mutually (and separately) sacred: Christ for Euronwy and the aboriginal mythical figure of Rhitta Gawr for Morfydd. The submerging of individual ego in the interests of the greater good is a powerful response to a situation of military crisis. Creative possibilities for the individual and the social community thus arise in the face of a common threat. 499 A.D. is a period of crisis and transition which is to allow a new scope for women's roles. Porius Manlius alludes to the Byzantine court where "the successors of Constantine let the love of women govern the empire" (213). Morfydd's sacrifice of her personal desires is not only a contribution to political harmony but the opportunity for a stage in personal growth. Morfydd develops an inner strength which astonishes even the stoic Brochvael. Euronwy merely laments the subjection of women and their victim role to male caprice:

Child, child, don't you see how piteous life is--how  
cruel to us women! 'He'--'them'--that's the way it  
always is! 'They' go--and we wait and wonder.  
'They' come--and we plot and scheme. The mother's  
hand there--the wife's hand here and what do we  
really know of them and their thoughts? *Nothing!*  
(203)

Morfydd, however, partly liberates herself from this stoic subjection of Euronwy, partly perhaps because of her creative response. As she says to Brochvael later when he offers to spirit her away to safety in Gaul: "Did you think--does Euronwy think--that the heart of a woman can be turned into a blood covenant, into a life and death contract, between two nations, and *nothing happen to it?*" (433) She goes on to assert that the Morfydd of youth is dead and that a new and radically changed Morfydd is now emerging.

The significance of Morfydd's response is to reveal a typically feminine strength produced by inwardness and self realisation. Men are of course not precluded from this development, especially those who have a feminine component within themselves. However, it is women who lead and excel in a spiritual movement which has a tremendous significance in a period of war. In the chapter "The Aborigines", Morfydd makes a second vow: not to Rhitta Gawr but to her own self. She makes it after perceiving a shadow image of herself projected by sun and shadow. This image is of "one in whom had been engendered a more gallant, defiant and adventurous temper" (467). The vow she makes to this reborn second self is that "she would sink into her spirit and remain strong and intact, there, however much she betrayed herself elsewhere" (468). The reward for her fidelity to this principle is a new level of inner freedom free from the bonds of love. Thus Morfydd learns to value the friendly

closeness of her relationship to Porius over the passion she feels for Rhun. When she makes love to Porius in Chapter XVII, "The Home Rock," she discovers why they are both able to preserve their separate identities intact. Perhaps Powys's description of Morfydd's experience with Porius expresses most closely his mature notion of love:

*Her feelings were less elemental and more realistic. She felt she was yielding up to the creature she knew best in the world, and liked best in the world, and with whom she had most in common in the world, everything that was hers to yield, everything that is to say, except the evasive I am I within her that must stay itself whatever happened, so that his I am I she liked so well might stay itself also. (638)*

This description seems to combine a traditional image of feminine yieldingness with a rationalism and a sense of individual strength other writers of romance might give to their male characters. The emphasis on mutual individuality within love, though like that of D. H. Lawrence, is less confined by the obsession with power and dominance. In the holograph text Morfydd differentiates male and female love by proclaiming "We don't choose love. It chooses us. With men it is a mixture of chance and choice."

If, according to Powys, "feminine souls, like ethereal silk-worms, spin around them psychic cocoons" (230), male souls can adopt more deeply destructive attitudes than are present in any females, including Nineue. For example, Medrawd epitomises the male spirit as fatally controlled by the impulses of hate, war and destruction. Medrawd even creates a metaphysic of life out of these principles. If men and women are involved in the "ancient play of creation," men appear to be more infinitely destructive than women. Whereas Nineue is "femininity in the abstract" Medrawd is the male abstract principle at its most destructive.

Even Rhun adumbrates to a degree this male spirit of destruction for, without the feminine sensibility of Porius, Rhun is devoted to a male dominated religion, Mithraism. Porius comments that Rhun becomes angry whenever Morfydd quotes Latin: "It's because she's a woman. He doesn't like women knowing Greek and Latin. That's the religion of Mithras: to keep them ignorant!" (36) When Rhun makes love to Morfydd, he does so aggressively and they respond "according to the different natures of men and women"--Morfydd tender and loving, Rhun lustful. Rhun drains "to the dregs the maddeningly sweet draught of impersonal femininity" and "gives himself up to all the brutality of the primeval male." (459)

The brutality of the more sophisticated male is presented in Medrawd, a culminating image of male destructiveness in this novel and the latest representative in Powys's fiction of the life hating and death embracing William Hastings of *Ducdame* (1925). Hastings embodies the

philosophy of what Powys in *The Complex Vision* (1920) calls *Malice*, the negative half of the Life versus Death dualism which is part of the energising polarity of the universe. Medrawd's *raison d'être* is to "get even with life" (569) and he expounds this philosophy in a scene comprised of the slaughtered Modrybedd and Cadawg. There is some thematic significance to the atrocity committed upon the bodies of Tonwen and Cadawg, in that their severed heads are placed upon each other's bodies. Porius carefully rectifies this unseemly breach of primitive battle decorum, a demonic symbol of sexual miscegenation. After all, in encountering the Gawres, Porius experienced "the primal mystery of the differing consciousness of male and female" as "a transforming blow which [strikes] his whole organism" (513). This physical outrage is met by the metaphysical outrage of Medrawd's spiritually bankrupt defiance of the life principle:

*I have condemned life to die, and I have appointed war its executioner. The twin children of life, Hate-Love and Love-Hate, I have likewise condemned to death with war as their executioner. I am come that the world should have death. (570)*

Medrawd slept with Porius's mother in the hope that remorse for what he made her do would bring her to death. Medrawd's act is an attempt at an ultimate transformation of Eros to Thanatos. It is significant that Powys should link the most intense characterisations of sterility and malignancy with the male and maternity and fertility with the female, in both an early and a late novel. Moreover, Powys reinforces the associations of the female with divinity and fertility at the beginning of *Porius* by mythologising the river Dyfrydwy; Porius gazes on its waters and "thought of the vanished generations who had actually worshipped that gliding flood of divine water, eternally the same and yet eternally different, as befitted an immortal who was also a woman." (40)

I wish to complete the historical and personal dimensions of his presentation of the feminine by discussing Powys's depiction of the Modrybedd and his use of allusions to Homer and Aristophanes. The Modrybedd are fascinating because they embody a social and racial concept of matriarchy which is on its way out at the time when the action of the narrative is occurring.

The "Three Aunties" reveal the strength of the feminine as well as the transition of culture from a female to a male society. The princesses also combine an interesting mixture of feminine values: passion, endurance, wisdom and guile. Erddud is certainly conscious of the superiority of her sex when she displays a sharply critical view of men: "Men are all the same. All stupid, all quite mad." (175) The Modrybedd are aristocrats but illiterate, the representatives of a pre-civilised culture, the culture of the forest people who are opposed to Rome, "civilisation" and the masculine assertiveness of war. In fact the "rule" of the Modrybedd is interestingly described as "anti-rule":

Thus for generations the matriarchal mothers and grandmothers and sisters and aunts of the household of Ogof-y-Gawr had, we must not say ruled the land, for the forest people, on the strength of a tradition from Africa far older than Christianity, were at once anarchical and peaceful . . . . (308)

Powys's identification with Welsh culture must have influenced his quest into the feminine. Celtic historians such as Nora Chadwick, substantiate the high position of women in Welsh society. She comments that in Britain the sagas tell us of households which trained the heroes in arms as well as gnomic wisdom and that there are "a number of instances which seem to support the memory of a time when there were women rulers in the ancient Celtic world."<sup>6</sup> Powys is also interested in the theories of H. J. Massingham in *Downland Man* that a peaceful aboriginal and agricultural community was the origin of man and that technology and rational "civilisation" brought war and conflict into human society. Thus in the holograph text Morfydd is taught by her mother that women are nearer to nature; however, it appears as if this tradition of peaceful rule is on its way out in 499 A.D.

Porius reacts against the largely matriarchical experience and formal education in his earlier years. Perhaps Powys is seeking a balance between masculine and feminine values, an integration of psychic opposites similar to that explored in C. G. Jung's analytical psychology. Neither men nor women are glorified excessively or shown to be without their short-comings. The principle of dominance whether dramatised in the feminine Nineue or the male Medrawd is equally destructive. Powys does not poeticise the feminine in order to conform to the Jungian Anima; there is not the spiritualisation or glorification of the feminine principle as an ideal aspect of the soul which Jung exemplifies through the cults of the Virgin and the traditions of grail romance. Rather, Powys anthropologises the Grail. Women, moreover, are appreciated for their common sense, their realism and their practicality. The feminine should be incarnate reality not an abstract ideal to be worshipped from afar since the balance of opposites is destroyed if either man or woman dominates excessively. If it is part of the Celtic tradition to accept the supernatural as an aspect of the natural or vice-versa, then the feminine as a component of the human totality must similarly be accepted.

Another element that Powys weaves into his historical tapestry is the Greek Classical one. Brochvael, with his passion for Greek texts, is the central representative of this tradition in the novel. His speeches are scattered with phrases and allusions to Homer and the texts of Aristophanes; because of this classical, rationalistic allegiance he nurses ambivalent feelings towards the Modrybedd. Morfydd, too, is very much her father's daughter, schooled in Homer and Virgil and loyal to her father despite her occasional outbursts against him. Her character seems to be conceived in relation to Greek and Homeric ideals of women; she

is faithful, rational, steadfast, if capable of passion. The reader somehow assumes that she will be faithful to her choice of being the helpmeet of Porius rather than the passionate lover of Rhun. Thus she is a classical as much as a romantic heroine, capable of fulfilling a Penelope like role. The opposing homeric archetype--the Circean enchantress--is dramatised in Nineue or Gwendydd.

In Chapter XX, "The House of Stone," Rhun brings to Brochvael from Dion Dionides, manuscripts of the Greek texts of Aristophanes: *The Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriasuzae* and *The Ecclesiazusae*. These texts form a meaningful body of allusion which comments on the gender themes of *Porius*. Brochvael alludes to the plays as a proclamation against tyranny, referring to the Christian and heathen tyrants who "are always making to end our freedom of thought and speech, and to compel us by force to follow their particular principles and dogmas." (440) He murmurs to Rhun syllables said to be from *Lysistrata*: "the use of force is the most horrible of all things." In the two other less well known plays Brochvael touches on the gender theme by selecting for his meditation passages of "oceanic ribaldry wherein the pedantry and pomposity of men, and the naturalness and rebelliousness of women . . . reached . . . the . . . chaotic profanity that especially appealed to him." (441-442)

The Rabelaisian/Aristophanic humanist spirit exposes for Brochvael what he refers to as "the maddest human insanities--like those of nationalism and war" (442). Brochvael returns unwillingly to the "unreality of reality"; however, the Greek texts obviously comment on reality. *The Lysistrata* was written at the darkest period of the Peloponnesian war (B.C. 412) before the fall of Athens. The situation is parallel to that of Romano-Britain awaiting the desecration of its civilisation by the Germanic hordes led by Colgrim. In this situation the women take the initiative and develop their farcical plan to create peace: they will abstain from sex until the men lay down their arms. The women in their "natural rebelliousness" utilise two of the most powerful pieces of practical ammunition; sex and money. They seize the Acropolis and lock up the store of silver necessary to finance the war. The men are forced to negotiate for peace but not before the plan is threatened by some women who have difficulty controlling their passions and some men with unruly erections. This comic dimension of sexuality is a perspective which Powys makes important in *Porius*.

Classical scholars regard *Lysistrata* as a joke against women as much as propaganda for peace. Nevertheless, the women of *Porius*, human and vulnerable in their rebelliousness, rebel partly because they are the victims of men. Euronwy, Morfydd, Sibylla and Teleri have this much in common with the Athenian women of the fifth century B.C. in their fifth century A.D. struggles.

The *Thesmophoriasuzae* is a happier play, associated with the Greek rites of the Thesmophoria in which the Mother and Daughter archetypes are the honoured representatives of the visible world above rather than

the lower world of Hades. The Thesmophoria were "the givers and guardians of Home, of the social laws, the rights of property, the laws of wedlock and the laws of family." Only women participated in this festival which involved a ritual ascent to the Thesmophoria and a ritual Hades-like descent. In the plot of the play Euripides is threatened with punishment for his slanders against women. He sends an emissary disguised as a woman but he the emissary is discovered. Euripides eventually appears in order to rescue him.

There are two descents and one ascent in *Porius*: a descent to the Mound of Y Bychan by Brochvael to meet the druid and in a later mythological episode, (omitted in the published text) a descent involving a dwarf, Paun-Bach, and the boy Bleiddyn. There is an ascent to Y Wyddfa and to Cader Idris by Porius involving an encounter with the Cewri and the descent of Myrddin into Y Wyddfa (the name means *Tomb*); Porius is followed by Nineue in his ascent of Cader Idris. The feminine is associated with the worlds of light, reason and common sense; the male with a descent into the unconscious worlds of death and destruction. It was after all the Male god of the underworld who stole Persephone.

The allusions to the rites of the Thesmophoria are profoundly relevant to the historical and mythical core of *Porius*. The allusion to Aristophanic comedy is brief in the published text but expanded upon in the holograph manuscript; in the later sections of the novel Brochvael peruses the Aristophanic manuscripts and even quotes from *The Ecclesiasuzae* the words of Praxagora on her policy of communistic social equality. Moreover, the rites of Thesmophoria were commented upon by anthropologists such as Frazer and Jane Harrison with whose work Powys was undoubtedly familiar. The anthropologists related the rites to fertility rituals, described by Jane Harrison as a "late autumn festival connected with Sowing." The time setting of *Porius* coincides with this calendar period and the Thesmophoria relate closely to the references to the Feast of the Sowing. The three festivals of the Greek festival comprised a Kathodos and Anodos or "Downgoing and Uprising." For example, swine were cast into a pit and then drawn up again as part of a symbolic purification process. Then, after a second period of fasting (Nesteia) there was a rebirth or Kalligeneia. The rebirth phase relates to the Celtic motif of the cauldron of rebirth, an important structural motif in *Porius* which is explicitly presented by Cadawg and the "three Aunties" in Chapter XVI, "The Youngest Princess."

The rituals of the Thesmophoria, which were solely the preserve of women, and held in secret by them, also involved the pronouncement of ritual curses, one of which occurs in Aristophane's play *Thesmophoriasuzae*:

If any plot against the cause of women

...

Curse him that he may miserably perish

He and his house.

The Thesmophoria are related by L. R. Farnell<sup>7</sup> to fertility rites of field and womb, in turn associated with Persephone and Demeter, archetypes of Mother and Maiden rather than mother and daughter. The bitter rebelliousness of Morfydd against Brochvael and against the priest who refuses decent burial to Teleri's desecrated corpse come close to formal curses. Also, oaths of special sanctity associated with the Mother and Maiden were publically declared at the Thesmophoria. This ritual aspect reinforces the feminist significance of the sacred partnership of Euronwy and Morfydd, which was cemented by sacred oaths to Christ and Rhitta Gawr. In the holograph text Powys describes Euronwy as grasping Morfydd's fingers and raising them to her love starved lips.

Anthropologists were eager to claim the Thesmophoria as evidence for matriarchal theory of society. The exclusive rights of women over rituals associated with the fertility of fields and womb suggested that agriculture as well as human reproduction were the achievement of women. To men were assigned the aggressive and destructive roles of war and conflict. If the theory were correct, the corollary would be that since women exercised authority over fertility rites they would also have control over all religion. Thus Euronwy fosters the fanatical Christianity of Minnawc Gorsant and Morfydd battles the priest for Cuneddan power by demanding her right to fulfill the last rites for Teleri.

Powys then appears to be expounding a feminist view of history derived from a feminist anthropology. The clearest evidence for this thesis lies in Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, a work which had a continuing impact on Powys. In the tenth chapter of the second volume of this work Spengler argues that the most unfathomable secret of the cosmic flowings that we call life is their separation into two sexes. The Feminine stands closer to the cosmic, rooted deeper in the earth and involved in the grand cyclic rhythms of nature. The Male, in contrast, experiences Destiny, comprehends causality or the causal logic of the Become. The female, however, *is* Destiny herself; to the female time and causality are alien. In Spengler's words, the man *makes* history, the women *is* history.

In *The Ecclesiasuzae* the women again take control over the men who are engaged in the wars against Sparta. After a defeat of the league against Sparta at Corinth (394 B.C.) Aristophanes portrays the decision of the women to take control of government away from the men and to govern Athens in a communistic league. The conservative women oppose the plan as do the men--one of whom fears that women may force the men to make love to them. (As Brochvael comments, the use of force is indeed the most horrible of all things!) Scholars suggest that the communist state (in which no girl can marry except in accord with state rule) is a satire on Plato's *Republic*. These Aristophanic allusions thus serve a complex function for they reveal the strength of women, the short-comings of men, the common sense of women and the destructive



quarrelsomeness of men. They also reveal the problems which occur when the Golden Mean is abrogated, power abused and tyranny instituted, whether it be a masculine or feminine tyranny. The golden mean is difficult to achieve in the context of the power struggle between men and women.

This power struggle is of course never definitely resolved but continues throughout history in different forms. When war and destruction threaten the dissolution of all order the redressing of the power balance from masculine to feminine values becomes more crucial. It is after bringing the Aristophanic books to Brochvael that Rhun makes love to Morfydd and in the contact of their eyes perceives "the ancient play of creation, amalgamation, and destruction" (457). It is the function of the mythological level of *Porius* to explore the role of the feminine in this universal rather than specifically historical context.

The mythological level is related to a more intuitive perceptual level. In Chapter II, "The Cave of Mithras," *Porius* partakes with Rhun of the rites of Mithras and in exploring this other spiritual system in the religious multiverse of 499 A.D. *Porius* contrasts the cultic world of Mithras with Morfydd's classical rationalism. As *Porius* partakes of the honeyed Mithraic chalice he experiences what he could never describe to Morfydd:

Still less would it have been possible (after taking the delicious sex-sweetness from the soft limbs of women and transferring it to the inhuman but immortal elements) to explain to a girl brought up on Homer that *with that taste* there came to him the feeling that the whole difference between good and evil was connected with some obscure struggle between man and woman. (45)

The language indicates that Powys is finding his ideas difficult to articulate. *Porius's* reaction is a feeling and not a thought and the gender struggle is "obscure." However, Powys allows *Porius* to develop this early intuition much later when he meets the Cewri in Chapter XXII. *Porius's* rape of the Gawres leaves him exhausted but his partner restores him "out of those elementary depths of planetary substance, substance of air, substance of water, substance of fire, substance of earth, into which, beyond and beneath the living substance of flesh, extended the great paradisiac division of male and female" (518). *Porius* experiences a state of alchemical unity, a Jungian integration of the dualistic elements in creation. The *Paradisiac* division of male and female is a balanced opposition which expresses a primal unity. The fall from the paradisiac state is a condition not so much of separation as of opposition or inequality and this lack of integration is perceived as a source of good and evil. Under "evil" I infer that Powys draws together such terms as tyranny, destruction and power dominance which are evil whether they occur under the categories of masculine or feminine.

The spokesperson for this characteristic moral vision is Myrddin Wyllt, a character at the centre of the mythology of the novel. Myrddin, with his bulk, his grotesqueness and his primary association with the earthy aspects of nature is a central symbol of the descendent rather than the transcendental. Myrddin, moreover, identifies evil with tyranny:

Nobody in the world, nobody beyond the world, can be trusted with power, unless it be our mother the earth; but I doubt whether even she can. The Golden Age can never come again till governments and rulers and kings and emperors and priests and druids and gods and devils learn to unmake themselves as I did, and leave men and women to themselves. (276)

Myrddin Wyllt all but identifies the feminine principle with the earth with which *Porius's* female giantess seems to be unified. In the holograph text *Porius* clarifies this link between the feminine and nature. *Porius* joins Morfydd in resistance to the priest who is refusing to honour the remains of Teleri and comments that his only hope would be to "use the feminine element at the heart of the religion itself, an element that would in the end resolve everything back to Nature" (2028). There is a significant connection made here between the feminine, nature and religion. Myrddin expresses a distinctive Spenglerian determinist vision in which tyrannies and dominions are destined to recur. There is, however, another possibility for the path of history which need not be bound so fatally to recurring tyranny if only men and women can simply be left to themselves to establish a truly complementary and balanced unity. That unity depends upon a recognition of the integrity and difference of masculine and feminine identities.

Myrddin Wyllt is a complex human symbol, partly identified with the earth as mother and an opponent of the male and female tyrants born from the mother, even as he himself seems to incorporate aspects of the feminine. His opposition to power and tyranny makes him a representative of a passivity which *Porius* experiences as a kind of femininity. When *Porius* meets him at the cave of Mithras he describes Myrddin "muttering like an old witch-wife." He is also seized by a physical collapse that leaves him passive and helpless in *Porius's* giant arms. Powys, as narrator comments:

There was a rich, deep, dangerous, sensual pleasure in feeling this tremendous entity, this huge composite earth-creature, thus so helpless in his hands. How it yielded, and how much of it there was to yield. (59)

The yieldingness is a regression to the planetary consciousness, a sharing in the collective rather than a separation of consciousness into the

limitations which individuality brings. The "paradasic division of male and female," also extends *beneath* the natural world; Porius's experience with the Gawres is foreshadowed by his experience with Myrddin for in both cases the embodiment of physical masculinity experiences a scope and power which proceeds from an ability to blend, assimilate and unify rather than to dominate and control. As with the matriarchy of the Modrybedd, femininity inspires rather than rules. Porius's submissiveness to women in the past has educated him to share this feminine perspective. Certainly sexuality is itself a powerful force in *Porius*, a force which paradoxically abrogates power. Perhaps this is why Powys introduced the rituals of the Fisher King as a backdrop to his narrative. The equation of femininity with the natural order is a lesson Morfydd learns from her mother (at least, she does so in the holograph manuscript).

Powys is true to the complexity of human sexuality by showing that women as well as men express the creative, the unifying and the destructive. He does not present a crude opposition of female creation to male destruction; anti-feminism exists in *Porius* because women as well as men are capable of imprisoning each other through tyranny. In the holograph text Rhun talks with Porius about "the pursuit of women for men as well as men for women and their desire to swallow men up" (2738). Even the impish Neb expresses his hatred for Nineue to Myrddin Wylt and adds, "I hate them all." "All women you mean?" asks Myrddin. "Yes, master" answers Neb. Porius too is resistant to the dominance of women in his life. What Powys refers to in his essay on Emily Bronte as "the real elements of what we are" include the tendency to direct our energies towards the wrong kind of assertion.

Nineue is a figure difficult to accommodate to Powys's perspective upon the feminine since she is presented as a sinister enchantress in the Circean mode, complicating the positive affirmation of womanhood with a negative image of power and dominance. The holograph text fills out the rather shadowy outlines of the figure of Nineue in the published text.

Along with Myrddin Wylt and the emperor Arthur, Nineue is inherited by Powys from the traditions of Arthurian romance. As the main representative of the Arthurian tradition she contrasts with the Romano-Celtic or Celtic mythological figures of Morfydd, Sibylla or Blodeuwedd. Moreover, in the holograph text Nineue is associated with the earth mother of the Titans, the betrayer of Uranus to Cronos, and of Cronos to Zeus. Myrddin associates her with Hecate, the moon maiden. Powys endows her with a racial hatred of the Cewri, so she stands in some ways as an antitype to Creiddylad. In the published text Nineue is presented as an abstraction of the Feminine, a product of the process of the intellectualising of Eros. Porius is compelled to encounter her because she is related to his revolt against early feminine dominance and the consequent ignorance of the feminine. The holograph text refers significantly to "Porius's ignorance of the Feminine Principle [which] was grotesque."

Such a psychological condition creates a conception of women as fearsome and power oriented creatures. In the holograph text Porius contrasts his male self which flings itself into all he enjoys with Nineue who draws into herself all she enjoys. The feminine appears as a potential succubus: passive, absorbing and draining. However, the holograph text complicates the presentation yet further by allowing more positive aspects of Nineue to appear. Porius sleeps with Nineue and experiences a sub-sensual ecstasy as well as what Porius terms "the comic aspect of Eros"; he enjoys moreover what he calls Nineue's Persephonian form. The comic and Persephonian aspects of Nineue link her with the Aristophanic sexual values explored through Brochvael's allusions. Powys as narrator states in the holograph text that "Eros might have shown that neither Morfydd nor Creiddylad could compare with Nineue in satisfying the voluptuous demands of Porius's exacting nature" (2333). Porius and Nineue share a mutual recognition that sex is comical. Sexual relations when innocent can be entered into in a festive spirit free from the sexual guilt which is part of the Platonising Western tradition. Porius, in his last encounter with Nineue in the published text, is made to feel sympathy for her because "she may have automatically leagued against her every male entity she encountered." Powys's ambivalence to Nineue reflects the ambivalence of Western culture to sexuality itself and, in attempting to explore this ambivalence, Powys does so in the spirit of the multiverse which is able to recognise varied or even contradictory responses to all aspects of experience.

Feminine self-realisation offers a true path of release from the compulsive patterns of destructive aggression and false love. The recreation of Blodeuwedd by Myrddin Wylt in Chapter XXVIII and the closely related episode of the rape of Teleri in Chapter XXVI, "The Half-Woman," dramatise these polarities of male destruction and female liberation. Undoubtedly the Celtic tradition represented an ultimate source of aboriginal wisdom in Powys's mind and he also wanted the reader to link the oppression of Blodeuwedd with the oppression of the whole Celtic tradition by the Germanic tribes and the Roman order.

In *The Mabinogion* Blodeuwedd is conjured by Math and Gwydion from flowers but Blodeuwedd betrays Math and is then transformed into an owl. In *Porius* the owl-maiden appears after the death and ravishment of Teleri by Medrawd--she is in a sense a reincarnation of Teleri. Morfydd defies the fanatical Christian priest who wants to refuse a proper burial for Teleri. In her resistance to him Morfydd achieves the greatest realisation of her integrity and individualism. She turns all her sardonic anger against the priest when he comments about Teleri that she "bit the hand that fed her": "Fed her ! Fed her! Thus are justified all . . . the abominable oppressions . . . *The hand that feeds us*. What else *should we bite?*" (630)

It is after this outburst that Blodeuwedd appears and inspires Morfydd in her liberation from subordination to male rule. Her situation



of being caught between the love of Rhun and fidelity to Porius is mirrored in the story of Blodeuwedd:

I turned from my light of love to my mate. You  
turned from your mate to your light of love. (633)

The owl-maiden rejoices in the process:

". . . And I'll do it again!" cried the owl. "Gwydion  
created me for his own glory and for the glory of his  
choice. O Yes! You're listening to me now,  
Gwydion son of don! But I shall defy you forever!  
And I shall have *my* choice forever!" (633)

The owl-maiden reflects the free spirit of Pelagius who insisted on the ability of the individual to create his or her own destiny, to serve the ends of the inner soul and not those of a tyrannical creator. The women in *Porius* take the lead in this process. Myrddin Wyllt shares with women this natural creative power, demonstrated most impressively by reincarnating the owl-maiden from beneath his cloak. Powys describes the action as "an improper and unsatisfactory human birth"--thus reinforcing the feminine aspect of Myrddin Wyllt--and its occurrence is a gesture of defiance against the male priest who refused proper burial to the desecrated corpse of Teleri. Powys states, ". . . by recreating Blodeuwedd the counsellor had in some queer way liberated all the souls of all the Teleris in the world." (657)

In the holograph text of *Porius* Powys makes more explicit the fact that Morfydd's liberation reaches its completest expression in the struggle over Teleri by describing Morfydd's struggle to regain the body of Teleri with the help of the dwarf Paun Bach who asserts that the truths revealed by the owl-maiden are to do with the magical secrets of life itself. The owl-maiden is identified with the ultimate defeat of Gwydion and Llew since she showed conclusively that no God can command a woman's heart. Moreover, the issue of Morfydd's victory in preserving respect for the body of Teleri is decisively expressed as a choice between the House of Cunedda or the Church of Rome as the controlling power over the forest people.

The reaction against the feminine is strongly present within the male figures. Porius, for example ". . . in his reaction against all the femininity that had so long enslaved him . . . hated the very curves of the brazier because they reminded him of soft despotic bodies . . ." (106)

Nineue's enlarged nipple revolts him--perhaps because he perceives maternalism as the cause of infantilism in men, even if this aspect of his successful resistance to feminine temptation is also a matter of chance. Drom's feminine love for Brochvael is another negative symbol dramatised at the end of Chapter XXV, "The Homage of Drom"; he gives

to Porius, after the death of Einion, a kiss of homage, presented as a parody of the kiss of Judas. Powys describes the kiss thus:

There was no treachery, no cruelty, no hypocrisy  
about Drom's kiss. It was worse. It took away a  
person's ultimate right--the abysmal *right to choose*,  
to choose *not* to love Drom or any living creature,  
the right to live alone, and finally to choose death if  
a person preferred death to life. (599)

Porius had fought his way out of this possessive version of Christian love through his aggressive consummation with Creiddylad. After that stupendous experience Porius had recalled a picture in his mother's room of the baby Jesus with a snake and of the expression in the snake's eye:

That expression was unmistakeable. "I protest," it  
said: "against this whole apotheosis of Love which  
you as god are now inaugurating. Love is the  
craftiest sublimation of the possessive instinct. I  
admit it gives with both hands. But what it does it  
always does for a reward. It lays up treasure. I tell  
you," so it had seemed to him the snake said, "one  
touch of freedom is worth a king's ransom of love."  
(509)

Powys wishes to redefine the relationships of men to women in order to give to both genders the maximum individual freedom and liberation. Porius directly qualifies the ideal in the holograph text with these words: "No, no, no. Love is certainly not enough. It needs pity and common sense and a lot more if it's not to breed hate and jealousy and suspicion and loathing and murder" (2022). Porius reflects Powys's ambivalence toward sexuality most clearly in the figure of Taliessin who, though dedicated to freeing men from the possessiveness within sexuality, seems to abandon sexuality altogether. He is described as "an elemental creature entirely devoid of all sex instincts." Moreover, though Powys seeks for a means of overcoming a crude dualism of the sexes and the problems of power, dominance and possession which limit individual freedom, he creates problems for himself by adhering to a firm notion of difference between the sexes. The principle of essential difference is bound to create a chasm between the masculine and feminine.

Nevertheless *Porius* dramatises the laughter of men and the anger of women, in Powys's words; it pays generous obeisance to the creativity, realism and pacifism of the feminine spirit; it redefines the idea of love and wrestles with the problems of power, dominance and enslavement that beset the social macrocosm as well as the relationships within its individual units. *Porius: A Romance of the Dark Ages* recreates history in the interest of redeeming the human spirit in the twentieth century. It reveals the essences of masculinity and femininity to uncover "the real elements of what we are" and it creates an alternative model of history

which allows men and women to see themselves as free agents of destiny in the process of becoming themselves rather than as units in an impersonal causal pattern. Powys's concern for sexual equality also radically revises the notion of Romance as a narrative motivated by a male's worship of the inaccessible feminine. The feminine for Powys is part of the warp and woof of reality in the natural order and in the individual psyche.

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#### NOTES

1. J. C. Powys, *Porius* (London: Macdonald and Co.), 1951, p. 83. All subsequent references are from this published text except where references are given to the holograph Ms., University of Texas at Austin.
2. "Polyphonic Powys: Dostoevsky, Bakhtin and *A Glastonbury Romance*," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Spring 1986, 55, 261-81.
3. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975).
4. (London: Joiner and Steele, 1931).
5. (London: Village Press, 1975).
6. *The Celts* (London: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 115.
7. *The Cults of The Greek States* (New York: Caratxas Bros., 1977), p. 111.

#### Talk, Detail, and Action: An Introduction to *Atlantis*

RICHARD MAXWELL

It is in Dickens's time that detail becomes a problem. Early Dickens novels are received with a reservation that seems to originate in class consciousness: this writer is obviously a Cockney, he has no stomach--or no principles--for keeping unimportant things out of his descriptions, he runs on and on, voracious journalist that he is. (Perhaps these approaches are best exemplified in the comments of James Fitzjames Stephens, Leslie's formidably unsympathetic brother.) At the same time Dickens's inclusive tendencies are a part of his fascination. They cannot be put in their place, not for long. By the time of *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1943), complaints about the novelist's tendency to dwell on odd fragments or to pack his book with trivia start to be assimilated into a less dismissive frame of reference. The irrelevant becomes essential, precisely *because* it is irrelevant. This interesting bit of circular reason works itself out by way of a double claim. Detail is associated with dream-vision on the one hand, with realism on the other. Dickens himself would seem to encourage both approaches. The moments in *Chuzzlewit* when people see *everything* are almost always oneiric: a typical tourist ascends to the roof of Todgers's and nearly falls off, so fascinated does he become by multitudes of chimney-pots and ship-masts; a murder-victim is stalked on a stormy night, when lightning makes the countryside around him visible all at once. Detail is thus a key to nightmare, a tip-off, even, that one is having a bad dream--and yet, at the same time, the novel makes an ultimately documentary use of its dream-like passages. The point of hoarding detail in the mind or on the page is to understand the world (and to share one's understanding with as many others as possible). Accumulation is a form of knowledge. Hallucination is a move towards establishing a public reality, which can then be shaped accordingly.

Dickens's peculiar accomplishment sets a pattern for much nineteenth-century fiction. When Roland Barthes wanted to attack the idea of realism as it flourished between *The Pickwick Papers* and *The Old Wive's Tale* (I mention English landmarks; others could be substituted) he decided, quite logically, to focus on detail. According to Barthes, irrelevant or drifting details are important not in themselves but as an authenticating device; rhetorically they make claim to truth, at least to the sort of truth that one can achieve on the basis of intense, sustained observation. Barthes's phrase for this process is "l'effet de réel"; realism is nothing less and nothing more than an effect. It is one among many possible effects, and therefore can boast no in-built claims to superiority. Certainly it has nothing to do with positivism. The humble detail, which began as a handmaiden to journalism, becomes in Barthes a crucial means of deception, a literary technique by which the con-job of the Victorian novel and its suspect claims to truth was put over on gullible readers.

Barthes works to separate detail from the idea of reference and ultimately to undermine the assumption that texts have referents outside the pull of language claims to truth. Another doyen of French post-structuralist thought, Jacques Derrida, adopts a related but distinct position. I will quote a good sentence of Terry Eagleton's: "Derrida's own typical habit of reading is to seize on some apparently peripheral fragment in the work--a footnote, a recurrent minor term or image, a casual allusion--and work it tenaciously through to the point where it threatens to dismantle the oppositions which govern the text as a whole."<sup>1</sup> Eagleton's description suggests to me a comparison between this "habit" of Derrida's and a technique often used by the great literary philologists. A reader of Erich Auerbach's sort might start with a paragraph, a sentence, a word or two, and from a prolonged scrutiny of this "point of entry" find his way into the sense and significance of a large-scale work--the *Divine Comedy*, say. Because Philology in Auerbach's mode assumes that there is a totality of a text or a culture, detail precisely studied becomes a unifying device. God is in the detail.<sup>2</sup> Derrida attempts, so to speak, philology without totality. Beginning from a presupposition that things are likely to fly apart, one way or another, he attempts what looks like a parody of Auerbach's philological habits. The rigorous study of detail reduces cultural or textual realities to rubble. So far from *le bon Dieu* inhabiting details, details prevent any inclusive view--God-informed or otherwise.

Neither Barthes nor Derrida is convincing on the subject of detail. Barthes's theory of reality-effects tends to homogenize details prematurely: they all do about the same thing, so it would appear. (Some of Barthes's other writings, *S/Z* and especially *Camera Lucida*, might actually be more helpful for the student of detail, a point Naomi Schor has recently substantiated.<sup>3</sup>) By contrast, Derrida's theory attributes so much significance to details that they are no longer details at all; the distinction between center and margins has been--unusefully--obliterated. In one respect only are the French post-structuralists of any great help when it comes to detail; having indulged "a liberal need to enfranchise the downtrodden masses of details, of secondary and subordinated events and objects, with their diversity and imperfection,"<sup>4</sup> they establish, at least, that detail in literature might still be a problem for people interested in reading and its consequences. They renew a debate which flagged around the time that Dickens began to seem old-fashioned.

If one wanted to open up the debate, to give it a fresh start, one could do worse than turn to John Cowper Powys, for whom detail was both a technique and a subject of investigation. I'm going to suggest that *Atlantis*, the last of his books which can accurately be called a novel--the later ones are fables, parables, or fantasies--includes as a prominent feature Powys's most considered account of detail. A few sentences will help me put this achievement in its biographical context. Powys began writing *Atlantis* during the summer of 1952. He was eighty years old. A number of friends had recently died; he felt his own fragility as well.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, there was no longer much call for the loose and baggy

monsters which Powys's nineteenth-century ambitions had encouraged him, during much of his life, to produce. He had just finished the humiliating task of cutting *Porius* for publication--and even though the pruned version sold well, another work of fiction on this formidable scale must have seemed out of the question, on grounds of public demand and perhaps on grounds of his own, lessening energies. In *Porius* there are occasional evocations of the lost continent of Atlantis, whose "formidable survivors" are said to have swept across Wales many centuries before the late classical-early Christian era. *Atlantis* describes the moment when that notorious continent has just been drowned; the old sailor Odysseus determines to sail towards and over it, an undertaking whose success the book chronicles. At times, this narrative feels like a prelude to *Porius*, or even like a flashback within it. It is almost as though, having cut his huge and bewilderingly multifarious novel, Powys wanted now to expand it: a kind of surreptitious revenge against the forces of concision, a demonstration that stories can always get longer.

Whatever *Atlantis's* relation to *Porius*, the two books share a crucial generic feature: both are novels close to epic and romance. Let me suppose, as an argumentative premise, that the use of insignificant, irrelevant detail (detail, in fact, of the Dickensian kind) is one feature that distinguishes the fiction of the last three centuries from these more traditional modes.<sup>6</sup> I can then make a tentative claim: that *Atlantis* is an attempt to conceive heroic action, action of the sort appropriate to epic and romance, within the terms of more modern fictions--terms oriented towards the feminine. This approach to the adventures of Odysseus is not altogether original with Powys. Many decades before the writing of *Atlantis*, Samuel Butler had suggested that there was an *Authoress of the Odyssey*; in other words, the second great Homeric epic not only features women prominently but suggests the work of a female sensibility. Powys picks up on this sort of perception, but takes it in a direction quite memorably his own. He keeps the focus of his narrative on the traditional epic hero, Odysseus himself; at the same time, he reimagines the significance of Odysseus's deed. According to Powys, heroic action is based on two prerequisites: oracular talk conceived as a dialogue; detail conceived as a collection of miniature detritus. Detail and talk (both feminine in Powys's conception, each helping define the other) make male action possible. Though this program will at first sound oddly specialized or stereotyped (who, for example, is to say with confidence that talk is female, action male; what could this mean?), I want to argue for its thoughtfulness.

The first two chapters of *Atlantis* introduce a pair of sacred precincts, each of which informs the novel's epic action. Chapter 1 treats a "square mile of mystery called 'Arima,' the boundary of which, as all the natives of Ithaca knew, Odysseus in his old age never cared to cross." (31) "Unploughed and unsown" (26), Arima is the haunt of Eurybia and Echidna, ancient goddesses who have, over many centuries, carried on an unending argument: "a sort of phantom-ritual, not between two worshippers but between two objects of worship." The object-like quality

of these peculiar deities is underlined by their physical form; the one is a "thick wooden stump," the other a "short but very massive pillar of clearly articulated white stones, each one of which contained, embedded in the texture of its substance, a noticeable array of fossils." (27) Ghostly mists, female in shape, hover over these "Images and Idols." Those who desire an interpretation of one religious Mystery or another can situate themselves--if they dare--equidistantly between stump and pillar; listening to the "undying dialogue" (29) of these Beings may produce a revelation about the secrets of the cosmos or lead to bizarre varieties of sexual madness, including bestiality and incest.

Once can imagine an *Atlantis* whose climactic event would be an Odyssean intrusion upon Arima, a wily confrontation with its appalling deities; Powys is not writing that book, however. The goddesses go on talking throughout *Atlantis*; they are interrupted only once, and never by Odysseus. Their conversation is disturbing but blurred; no one ever makes out exactly what they are saying. The exchange of Eurybia and Echidna is seldom, so to speak, foregrounded. On the other hand, it does serve as a model for a kind of oracular speech. I say *a kind* because Powys goes out of his way to show that there are alternative forms for prophetic utterance. The priest of the Mysteries of Orpheus, Enorches, show up occasionally to chant a hymn to Nothingness. The point about Enorches is that he is talking, largely, to himself. Certainly he never engages in anything that could be called a dialogue or a conversation. The name Enorches is translated by Powys as "big balls"; Enorches is known to his close associates as "the well-hung brother." Powys is not joking randomly here. He wants to place Enorches as offering an exaggeratedly male sort of prophecy, the goddesses of Arima as offering a female sort. For the purposes of *Atlantis*, women prophesy most effectively by arguing with one another whereas men rant into the void, or into a crowd. I should note that the feminine prophetic mode is really no more pleasant than the male: Echidna and Eurybia aren't having a tea-party, they're participating in a "ghastly antiphonic ritual." (227) Their presence is quite as exhausting as Enorches's. The point is that both sorts of prophecy are effective in given contexts. Both, according to examples provided by Powys, remain gender-bound. Odysseus latches on to a young girl, Pontopereia, the daughter of Tiresias and a promising prophet herself. She is supposed to help Odysseus convince his subject to give him sail-cloth so that he can leave Ithaca. Enorches out-rants her. Prophetically she is a failure at this point, because she tries to prophesy in a male vein.

I will return in due course to Arima and its implications. But first *Atlantis's* second sacred precinct must be discussed. In chapter 2 of the novel, the aged king Odysseus is awakened by a "quavering, rasping, high-pitched appeal" from Kleta, a dryad who lives in an oak beneath the hill where Odysseus's palace stands. Kleta's vocation throughout her life has been to cultivate a garden, which Powys pauses to describe:

Anyone, whether human or more than human, who turns nature into a garden is liable to find an unbelievable number of very small things that have once been parts of other things but are now *entities on their own* such as bits of wood, bits of stalk, bits of fungus, bits of small snail-shells, bits of empty birds' eggs, bits of animals' hair, bits of birds' feathers, bits of broken sheaths of long-perished buds and shattered insect-shards, strewn remnants of withered lichen-clusters, and scattered fragments of acorns and berries and oak-apples that have survived in these lonely trails and tracks to be scurf upon the skin of one world and the chaos-stuff for the creation of another. (44)

The fragments which preoccupy Kleta are somewhere near the outer limits of the organic. Many of them once performed the function of coverings, that is to say, their value lay not in their sensitivity--few have much connection, past or present, with nerve-systems--but in their hardness, their ability to protect. For this reason, they are separable from any organic source: scurf upon skin, as Powys puts it, they are eminently disposable, irrelevances that remind us of life without in any way embodying it. (How Kleta would have joyed in finger or toenail clippings!) At the same time they are "entities on their own." Perhaps the integrity of these bits and pieces lies in the protective function they once fulfilled; certainly, this function is reconstructed in Kleta's disposition of them. Organized assiduously, her collection of things suggests "secret vistas leading into divine sanctuaries where the smallest insects and the weakest worms could be safe at last from all those abominable injustices and cruel outrages . . . that lack even the excuse of lust." (43)

Into this distinctive landscape come Odysseus. Four times during the night Kleta has called to him; her repeated wails have finally riled him up, so he stalks outdoors. He is descending a flight of stairs which lead toward the oak and the garden of cast-off things when a gust of wind from the sea blows away clouds, "leaving in sight not only several zodiacal constellations, but among them, and yet not among them, such a shy, timid, lonely, brittle, shell-like crescent, that the idea of the Moon as she was before Artemis meddled with her, or Apollo meddled with the sun, whirled into his heavy skull." (47) With the moon arrives a vision of the ghost of Herakles--whose club is now owned by Odysseus. Then the ghost disappears and Odysseus arrives at the oak, where Kleta tells him that there is a world-wide crisis. The Olympian gods are just on the verge of falling; moreover, Atlantis has been inundated and the sea-monster Keto loosed.

Two points about Kleta's garden deserve emphasis:

The garden raises questions of scale. For instance, monsters figure prominently in the scheme of things opened up by Kleta. Shortly after her prediction, Odysseus faces Keto: Keto proves to be an enormous sea-

serpent with a threatening female face; her hair has a strange autumnal shade, something like dried leaves and is reminiscent of death. Much later, after he reaches Atlantis, Odysseus encounters "the man-Dragon Typhon" (428), male monster of this time. Neither Keto nor Typhon is annihilated; confronted by a god or giant (Poseidon, Orion), each turns tail and glides away harmlessly--leaving the humans who had prepared to confront them feeling small as insects.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, actual insects witness these and other events in the novel's action: within an opening in Herakles's club, which Odysseus carries with him, resides a scientific fly and a mystical moth. Frequent dialogues between fly and moth provide a point of reference throughout the narrative. To someone unfamiliar with *Atlantis*, a description of this entomological chorus might suggest a form of ludicrously false whimsy; Powys's conception serves its purpose, however, reshaping our sense of the relation between size and importance. Miniaturization becomes a way of underlining significance rather than a way of denying it. Within the frame established by the description of Kleta's garden, flies or moths can be granted greater importance than monsters from the sea; so can "a small active insect-like second nature" that speaks within more than one of Powys's human characters. A focus on tiny things facilitates a view of larger ones.<sup>9</sup>

No less than Arima, the garden raises questions of gender. Naomi Schor has recently argued the position that detail is, as it were, a gendered issue: focusing on details, we discover "a larger semantic network, bounded on the one side by the *ornamental*, with its traditional connotations of effeminacy and decadence, and on the other, by the *everyday*, whose 'prosiness' is rooted in the domestic sphere of social life presided over by women."<sup>10</sup> There couldn't be a better description of Kleta's garden, which suggests exactly the semantic network evoked in Schor's analysis. Powys has imagined a fragile world: its human beings tend to be old and therefore vulnerable to death at any moment (like the novelist and his friends), or else so young that they hardly know where they stand; its gods are vulnerable to being overturned, banished forever from their thrones. The notion of a shelter which is ornamental and domestic answers to the needs of such a world.

Arima, Kleta's garden: in case we miss the possibility of an interesting relation between these "precincts," Powys includes this comment in *Atlantis*: "If that portion of the island called Arima was dedicated to mystery and prophecy, the portion of it tended by Kleta was dedicated to the unruffled preservation of what is usually obliterated." (44) The emphasis here seems to be on a contrast. It's not clear how "mystery and prophecy" might connect with "unruffled preservation" except as opposites. Nonetheless, a scene midway through *Atlantis* suggests that the link might be a bit more elaborate. Kleta rushes to Arima and convinces the debating goddesses to participate in the war against Zeus. Almost immediately they uproot themselves, leaving behind them, "scoriac," "Excremental" scars in the earth. (227) Shortly after this spectacular exit, Kleta herself is destroyed, blown up by Zeus's last remaining thunderbolt. "The stretch of ground where the oak-tree's roots had been, were reduced

simultaneously to black ashes." (229) Another scoriac scar, another uprooting. Oracular dialogue and accumulated detail have been blasted away from Ithaca almost simultaneously. At this stage one starts to sense that--somehow or other--they belong together, that they come and go as a pair.

It is less a particular case (even one so outstanding as Herakles's club<sup>11</sup>) than it is the overall movement, the overall sense of *Atlantis* which draws from the spirits of Powys's two sacred precincts, and combines them to the end of action. So much is packed into the four hundred and fifty pages of this novel that a summary becomes nearly impossible. Rather than attempt an inclusive reading, I will focus on chapter ten of *Atlantis*: one of the great extended narratives in Powys, though the narrative--as will be seen--turns into something quite a bit harder to label. At the start of the tenth chapter, Odysseus's ship "Teras" (a name whose roots suggests "monster") has finally set sail. The boy Nisos, a son of Odysseus, attempts to define the sensation of a sea voyage. "I don't think . . . that it's exactly the mass of water, or the infinity of air, that makes us feel small. I think it is the ceasing of accustomed labour and the idleness that leaves the mind free to follow its fancies." (333) This freeing of the mind and the consequent sensation of smallness, a *fanciful* smallness set against a massive, elemental background, are crucial in the pages that follow.

Powys dwells initially on the ship's figurehead, a monster or prodigy which resembles the dreaded Master of Atlantis, the sage whom the club will ultimately destroy. The Master is said to have written a poem which is "the great oracle of man's destiny existing upon the earth." Unfortunately no one understands this poem, whose decoding will continue until the end of time. (This prediction by Powys is a joke, but a serious one; the crucial juxtaposition, I take it, is with the debate on Arima.) Powys then turns to a conversation below decks, a talk between two young women, Eione and Pontopereia. They are discussing the theory of lovemaking, which neither can test against practical application due to a lack of pertinent experience. Their debate is linked in its substance to the famous dispute between Zeus and Hera on whether it is men or women who receive more pleasure from sex<sup>12</sup>; that quarrel was judged by Tireisias the hermaphrodite, whose daughter, it will be recalled, is Pontopereia. After making his judgement, Tireisias was first struck blind, then endowed with prophetic power. Following a family tradition, Pontopereia strives to achieve her own prophetic voice. Her discussion with Eione becomes rancorous; in tone, rather than substance, as well as in form (feminine conversation aspiring to prophecy), it links the present scene to the governing example of Arima.

Next Powys develops a different point. Pontopereia begins to sense that Eione is getting the better of her (displaying greater eloquence, greater nerve), so she cites a passage from the Master's poem--a passage concerning Atlantis, apparently relayed to her by Nisos--then, in a loud voice, calls for Nisos himself. It is not explained clearly why she

summons him at just this moment; one implication is that he, too, seeks a prophetic voice, and is thus an appropriate ally, another that the entrance of an actual, palpable male into an overly-theoretical conversation about men and women might somehow tilt the balance of the argument in Pontopereia's favor. Nisos, the son of that Odysseus who feared Arima, anticipates a certain awkwardness in responding to Pontopereia's rather brusque call; perhaps he senses that her tone is *overly* urgent, that there is no way he can win from running into this particular conflict. From the moment of his hesitation, the already intricate action of chapter ten slows down and ramifies relentlessly, much as though Powys were adjusting to the combined pressure of idleness, freedom, impenetrability, and Pontopereia's ambiguous, imperious demand.

Here's what happens:

In a prelude to the chapter's main events, Nisos steps round the starboard side of the ship. He takes this route, "as we so often say, 'for a trivial reason'" (342): because he is fascinated with an indentation in the skull of the oarsman Euros, a mark which Nisos understands to be a sign of refinement. Distracted by the indentation, "a symbol of all that was delicate and vulnerable in humanity," he trips; straightening up, he turns seaward, where he is faced by an extraordinary vision: on one side of him, "a flaming red sun sank behind the horizon; and on the other a pale full moon rose above the horizon." (343) Each of the "celestial luminaries" is framed by one oar-hole; the four oarsmen and Nisos all understand this juxtaposition to be a singular and memorable one, but each receives it in a way peculiar to his personality. Only one sensation seems to be shared by the five; they all feel that they are about to be torn in half "by two sanguinary opponents." (344)

A summary-in-progress: Female conflict on the model of Arima provokes confused male action. Male action is redirected by the thought of a delicate indentation, a detail apparently--though not actually--overvalued. The indentation causes a blunder which brings into sight two matched principles of *Atlantis's* roomy universe (male sun, female moon). These principles are caught at a turning point when one seems about to supersede the other.<sup>13</sup> "Supersede" may be the wrong word, though: Odysseus's fondest desire is to sink, like the sun, under the sea, and there to explore Atlantis; sinking is not necessary defeat, action can be quite effective when it seems to take the form of delay or submission, which it does under the influence of the moon and of feminine argument. A further possibility: the rise of the moon might even in some way facilitate the sun's triumphant descent. The sense in these intertwined analogies and interlinked chains of cause and effect is of a contrast and combination stated, restated, imagined, reimagined--broken down to an end not yet certain. The emphasis is on preserving differences, refining them ever more minutely within the framework of a cosmological drama. We're learning to see very small things and very large things at the same time, and to do so in a way associated with overlapping arguments.

Arima and Kleta's garden--prophetic feminine dialogue and the cultivation of detail--are brought into ever-closer juxtaposition.

A few minutes after he trips, Nisos enters the cabin where Pontopereia and Eione were recently talking. Odysseus follows, requesting a volunteer. (A volunteer for what? He does not say.) Eione leaps from her bed where she appeared to be asleep, leaving "a twisted couple of tiny fair hairs held together by an infinitesimal flake of cinder-dust that must have adhered to them when she was recently heating water for her bath." (346) She moves within a span of things that Kleta would have grabbed at and hoarded up--but isn't yet prepared to see them and work with them. Odysseus evidently wants Eione, who becomes his volunteer, to witness yet another feminine argument, this time between the two older women on the voyage, Nausikaa and Okyrhōe. The two of them are debating the wisdom of Odysseus's voyage towards Atlantis, a conversation witnessed voyeuristically by the old hero, Eione, and eventually by Nisos. Before the spy-game has gotten very far, though, there is an interruption from above. Pegasos the flying horse, who played a significant role in earlier chapters, arrives on deck with a fresh load of characters: they have escaped from a violent uprising on Ithaca, a revolution in which Odysseus's family has been overthrown, his old nurse Eurykleia killed. As the "crisis" of this unexpected visit unfolds, as we take in the news of a revolution against Odysseus (whose relation to the revolt against Zeus remains curiously uncertain), Nisos turns to the moon "which was now moving with that motionless movement which is unlike any other movement in the universe, [flooding] the whole of what was visible, as well as . . . the whole of what was invisible, with an enchantment that separated the real life of each separate living thing from the life imagined as its life by all other living things." (352)

As might be expected, the moon is not only a female power but a power of differentiation. Differentiation, Powys implies, is Odysseus's field also. He possesses a narrow will, a "massively impenetrable being: this will and being work on the world through many turns" [*polytropos*, the crucial Homeric term implied though not directly cited by Powys: cf. 401, "a will that multiplies itself"]. Putting the point another way: Odysseus is the male epic hero in whom male desire is realized by what Powys defines as a feminine method and under the sponsorship of a feminine prophetic debate which the hero once feared but is presently attempting to face. The novelist offers this striking observation: to separate Odysseus's character from his desires would be like separating the moon from its light. If he reaches the moment at which he can descend towards Atlantis (sink like the sun), it will be because he has conspired to respect and articulate difference, much like the rising moon. Powys includes a droll example of such a process. When a question from Odysseus elicits a "universal sigh," the sigh is imagined as coming not just from members of the crowd but also "from the ignoble hairs under their arms, whether male or female, and from every crushed, deformed, twisted, and squeezed-sideways toe-nail in that crowd" as well as from a lengthy catalogue of "small, disregarded, insignificant objects" floating on



the sea's surface. (355) Powys here celebrates what he calls "a moon-induced mania for minute observation." (354) This mania is necessary for comprehending the "psychic knot" formed by the crowd on the deck of the Teras; it is also necessary for moving or influencing the crowd, since influence can only occur through many Odyssean turns.

A book in which insignificant things begin to speak, to have a voice of their own, is a moment when the themes of talk and detail have merged almost perfectly. Detail is articulation, talk is articulateness. Both are elaborative, turning inwards and thus producing more of themselves, an abundance which--as I will reiterate in conclusion--creates an expectation of action and then transforms it. All along, one feels about the Odysseus of the novel that he is doing a great deal and yet isn't doing very much at all. His heroism seems unsatisfactory. However, an action which is not really action, which spreads itself out like an eternal debate or a fiercely watched collection of detritus, is no less effective for its tendency to disappear when scrutinized. Powys teases his readers with the implication that Odysseus won't be able to accomplish anything important until the moon disappears. According to the helmsman Akron, Odysseus's "hope is that a cloud may cover up this confounded Moon" (375), thus revealing the stars by which the ship can sail towards the West. Again according to Akron, Odysseus will wait for the sun's reappearance before he descends to Atlantis. (378) Neither of these predictions comes true. The moonlight brings the Teras to the island of Wone. Here, it is revealed, Eurybia and Echidna have transplanted themselves, in the hopes of furthering the revolution against Zeus. Powys's revelation that these formidable deities were going to show up during the voyage is far from a surprise. Just before their departure, the goddesses moaned and wailed over Arima "just as over the drowned temples of Atlantis Odysseus might have heard his ship's rigging respond to the wind." (222) Elsewhere in *Atlantis*, Powys works out further the association between Arima and Atlantis, between the rooted debate and the voyage towards a sunken city. We are told that Arima itself covered a sunken city, mysteriously called Gom. When the two deities find a new home on Wone, it is adjacent to drowned Atlantis. In venturing towards Atlantis, then, Odysseus also is venturing towards Arima--quite as though he had never left home. He is compelled to enter a territory previously avoided. He moves nearer than ever towards a prophetic mystery signalled by the presence of fearsome, arguing goddesses. Eventually--and without the help of the sun--the ship sails past the goddesses. Soon after, he actually descends to the destroyed metropolis. He then sets sail for a third island, perhaps more promising and hospitable than either Ithaca or Wone. Odysseus ultimately arrives in Manhattan, global source of wordy heterogeneity and a most appropriate terminus to the diffusive quests of *Atlantis*.

Two recent treatments of Powys--one by Charles Lock, the other by H. W. Fawcner--have emphasized respectively the novelist's use of polyphony (*via* Bakhtin) and his pantheistic respect for objects (*via* Baudrillard on "mineralogy").<sup>14</sup> I've been influenced by Lock's work and

would have been by Fawcner's if I'd come across it in time. I hope it's clear that to situate detail within a larger network of concepts in *Atlantis* is also to show the relation between polyphony and pantheism, which is to say between dialogue and detail: when the two overlap, the result is a powerful reevaluation of what it might mean to do something, to get somewhere, an underemphasized interest of Powys's. This is a topic I hope to learn more about. For the moment, I can guess that a late book like *Atlantis*, however wonderful in itself, may be most valuable for the light it helps to throw on earlier works. The arguing goddesses, the garden of trivia, the reimagined deeds consequent upon them, the voyage accomplished by every pore on every passenger aboard the Teras, are in this sense a prelude rather than an epilogue to the great fictional works of John Cowper Powys.

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## NOTES

1. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 133.
2. This phrase has been attributed to writers as diverse as Aby Warburg and Ferdinand Braudel (but never, so far as I know, to Erich Auerbach).
3. See Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987). Schor's book provides a crucial theoretical overview of recent ideas on detail; she is perhaps more sympathetic to the French tradition than am I.
4. Virgil Nemoianu's phrase: see his *Theory of the Secondary: Literature, Progress, and Reaction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
5. See Richard Perceval Graves, *The Brothers Powys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 314-317.
6. This argument could be refined with reference to Lukács's contrast between epic and novel on the one hand and drama on the other. (*The Historical Novel*, translated by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell [Boston: Beacon Press, 1963], chapter two, "Historical Novel and Historical Drama," *passim*).
7. One of the most striking passages in the book describes "a heap of supernaturally large and inhumanly pointed finger-nails, all torn and bloody": the play with scale (fingernails should be small; these are enormous, belonging, as they do, to the Harpies) is one of the typical maneuvers in *Atlantis*.
8. In Plato's *Timaeus*, Poseidon transforms Atlantis into an island in order to suppress general knowledge of his affair with Kleito; Kleito's name echoes both Keto's and Kleta's, an odd chain of associations, one which seems to hover on the edge of coherence without lapsing over it. Powys has one of his human characters make a bafflingly complex comment about the Kleta/Keto echo. (218)

9. I should note that before the end of *Atlantis*, the fly and the moth die, becoming miniscule lifeless objects which are then (their dying request) swallowed by a human character on the verge of death. Powys pushes his exploration of tiny things and their transformations as far as he possibly can, connecting it with a comic version of that ordeal of death-by-swallowing which Kronos famously initiated.

10. Schor, p. 4.

11. The club, as readers have recognized, is something of a difficulty. (See especially Peter G. Christensen, "Atlantis, la sexualité chez Powys," *Plein Chant*, 42-43.) In a context where details are valorized (where small is beautiful) and where the single most important tribute to details is identified with an ancient virginal nymph, a bulgingly phallic stick might seem to spoil the tone. Similarly, a club--no matter how capable of communing with its twisted self--would hardly seem an appropriate instrument of dialogue or of argument. A club means force. Nonetheless, Powys connects the club with the ornamental/domestic world of Kleta as with the unceasing debate that occurs on Arima; he does so by emphasizing a crack in it, the same crack where the fly and the moth shelter. The fly is male, the moth female. Huddled within the crack, much as Kleto huddles within her oak, they carry on an Arima-like discourse (though the distinction of sexes means a different tone). The tool of epic action is transformed into an object whose nature is decidedly mixed: it incorporates qualities of Arima as of Kleta's garden; it also combines male and female qualities. Moreover, all this mixing leads somewhere. At the end of the novel, the club will spontaneously destroy the androgyne sage of Atlantis, a scientific tyrant determined to use reason irrationally. I would guess that the club's androgynous character is attractive to Powys because the various gendered qualities are distinct; they are, in this sense, separable details. The tyrant's androgyny is taken to be so sinister largely because it involves a blurring of categories rather than an obsessive articulation of them. Blurring, in its turn, means talkativeness without dialogue, which itself leads to the predominance of a destructive instinct rather than a protective one like Kleta's.

12. At a later point in the action (390), the conversation between Eione and Pontopereira resumes; at this point it reproduces, almost exactly, the subject-matter of the Zeus-Hera controversy.

13. Powys has adopted an immemorial convention, one frequently associated with epic subjects. Cf. Albrecht Altdorfer's great painting *The Battle of Issus*, where Alexander's victory over Darius is signalled by a rising sun and eclipsing moon.

14. Charles Lock, "Polyphonic Powys: Dostoevsky, Bakhtin, and *A Glastonbury Romance*," *The University of Toronto Quarterly* 55 (Spring 1986); H. W. Fawcner, "ATLANTICISM: John Cowper Powys and Mineralogy," paper presented at the 1990 Powys Weekend Conference, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. My phrase-long summaries can, of course, do justice to neither Fawcner's nor Lock's argument.

W. J. KEITH

John Cowper Powys. *Maiden Castle*. The First Authoritative Edition. Edited by Ian Hughes. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990. Pp. xvi + 484. \$69.00 cloth.

To describe the publication of this edition as a major event in Powys studies would be accurate but a little pompous. Its appearance is not merely cause for academic celebration; what is important is that here, for the first time, we have the text of a major novel by a major novelist in a state close to that in which the author intended us to read it. Most subscribers to *Powys Notes* will know that, as with so many of JCP's books, the first edition was severely abridged, but Ian Hughes explains in his introduction the special circumstances relating to this novel. Presumably because of economic conditions during the Depression, Simon and Schuster, publishers of the first edition, laid down strict limits concerning length, and Powys, instead of being invited to present a shortened version, was confronted with a list of deletions relating to "a revised typescript of which he did not have a copy" (p. vii). The result was a text cut by approximately one-fifth. Hughes has identified 179 places where deletions and alterations, varying from a few words to several pages, were made. Needless to say, under these circumstances this butchering was not carried out with particular care, and a number of obscure and inconsistent references to omitted passages survived in the first edition--and in all subsequent editions until this one. Here at last we have a version which, if not absolutely "authoritative" and "complete," to quote the publishers' adjectives, is far superior to any hitherto available.

What kind of edition is it? Hughes provides a clean text based on the one surviving revised typescript preserved in the Bissell collection. At first glance, the edition doesn't look notably different from any other. It certainly doesn't look longer; indeed, the original 1936 version contained 539 pages of text against 484 here. But this is an altogether larger book than any of the previous printings, and more words are included on each page. Hughes explains his editorial principles clearly--though, as I shall indicate later, not always completely--in his introduction. The new material is not identified in any way within the text, so interested individuals will have to make their own collations. Regrettably, there is no *apparatus criticus* and no notes, textual or otherwise. For these, Hughes refers us to his University of Wales dissertation of 1984. One can, of course, readily understand the problems involved. Nonetheless, I still wish that the publishers had seen fit to include at least a brief appendix explaining the more arcane Welsh mythological references and some of the local Wessex allusions, both of which can prove puzzling to general readers.

The rest of this review will be divided into two parts. First, I shall attempt to indicate the ways in which this expanded text can increase our appreciation of the special qualities of the novel; second, I shall make some comments on the edition as an edition, not from a specialist

bibliographer's perspective, but from that of (I hope) a thoughtful and reasonably well-informed reader of JCP.

The first advantage of the unabridged text, apart from the obvious pleasure of having more JCP paragraphs to read, is that, as I have indicated, certain obscure or anomalous passages in the first edition now fall neatly into place. Here is a minor instance. On p. 402 of the 1936 edition, Dunbar Wye, at the display of excavated objects at Maiden Castle, remarks to his father of the female figure: "Mr. Quirm says it's not Demetrea, but the same thing in Welsh." Demetrea? I had always assumed a typographical error of some sort. A few pages earlier in the uncut version, however, there is a comic scene in which Dumbell publicly hails his father "with such a mumble-jumble of mispronounced names that the old gentleman couldn't have been put to greater shame. 'Did you say it was De-me-trea with Dion-issius, Dad?'" (p. 368). The text is now clear, and we realize that the abridged version was a "mumble-jumble" indeed.

A more significant example occurs towards the end of the sixth chapter where reference is made to "the argument between Dumbell and Claudius about the Past and the Future" (1936 ed., p.287). No such confrontation occurs in the abridged version, but, in the text as we now have it, on their return from Mai-Dun, Dud and Urien (as we must now spell Enoch Quirm's assumed name) encounter the Fascist and the Communist arguing at the coal yard. That these two should come face to face at some point in the novel is to be expected, and it is gratifying to know that JCP did not neglect the opportunity.

But most of the cuts have less obvious but still palpable effects. Hitherto, readers of *Maiden Castle* may have been surprised to encounter in the final chapter an abruptly introduced character by the name of Constancia Ferneau, who is engaged to attend the ailing Claudius at night. Originally, she had made a brief appearance in the second chapter. Once again, this explains an anomalous reference. We were told in the final chapter that there was "something queer . . . about [Constancia's] chin" (1936 ed., p.444); this reference remained obscure; now we discover early in the new edition that "malicious Providence had recently caused some kind of troublesome skin-affliction to appear on her chin" (p. 87). More important, however, is her contribution to one of the book's major preoccupations. Constancia looks after her somewhat querulous stepfather and arrives in the second chapter when he has requested Claudius's company. She adds her own mite, then, to the numerous child-parent relationships in the book. And above all, of course, the two scenes balance each other and become an example of JCP's concern for artistic structure that is totally ruined by the abridgement.

A comparable kind of structural balance is achieved in a scene in the third chapter when Dud, Claudius, Wizzie, and Jenny Dearth are walking to Glymes. Claudius draws Dud's attention to "incredible shapes . . . , taller than church-steeples, taller than sky-scrappers, *tall as hills*" (p. 119).

These turn out to be "*the wireless*"--the radio-transmission towers near Martinstown. The scene exists briefly in the first edition--this is one of the occasions, indeed, where a passage is not merely cut but revised and adapted to a drastically shortened form. The importance of the original, however, lies in the italicized phrase just quoted: the radio-station becomes a topographical symbol of Claudius's future and aptly balances Maiden Castle as the home of Urien's old gods from the past.

The "Snipper" (as JCP christened the anonymous editor who proposed the cuts) was clearly more interested in action and the more obvious relationships between the characters than in JCP's customary passages of philosophical or occult meditation. Many of the cuts occur in paragraphs where we are offered insight into the thought-processes of Dud and, later, of Wizzie. JCP can, it must be admitted, be repetitious, but apparent repetitions are often subtle developments of ideas that expand cumulatively in the course of the narrative. These, two, are often obscured by the cuts. Here is a short extract from the longest cut in the whole book, a conversation between Dud and Thuella at the beginning of chapter 2:

"What elements were *you* born under?" he suddenly asked.

"What--" she began.

"Don't say 'What do you mean?'," he went on almost peevishly. "It's not a silly question. I was born under earth and air. I'm bad at lighting fires and I hate rain. I expect you're just the opposite!" (pp.49-50)

Thuella eventually sees herself as determined by air and fire. The scene is important because it identifies the elemental make-up of the characters as a significant *leit-motiv* throughout the novel. As Dud comments towards the end of the final chapter, "I wonder if everybody . . . is as immersed in the elements as I am?" (1936 ed., p. 533; here, p. 479). Thuella's cloud-pictures, Urien's pressing his forehead to the earth on Maiden Castle, Dud's difficulty in lighting the fire at the dewpond are only some of the aspects of the book affected by this recurrent thematic interest. Only with the unabridged text can we fully appreciate JCP's conscious design.

Numerous other instances could be cited. It is difficult to be certain on such matters, since one can never reproduce a first reading, but I got the distinct impression that the revelation of Dud's paternity is more subtly prepared and controlled in the uncut version. Such details as the comparison between the Jenny-Wizzie relationship and that of Mrs. Urgan and Popsy now become clearer. A passage about the Maiden Castle "ghost-wind" (pp. 439-40), where it takes its place in an unlikely trinity with Wizzie's reaction to father (Urien) and son (Dud), now

illuminates the image for me as the abridged version had never done. It is clear, then, from these examples and many others that could be cited, that this new edition is essential reading for anyone seriously interested in JCP.

Both Ian Hughes and his publishers are to be warmly congratulated for providing this edition. We now have a reliable text that is pleasant to read, and it is obvious that a great deal of care and research has gone into its preparation. At the same time, I have to report that there are aspects of the editorial procedures that leave a little to be desired. A number of typographical errors that occurred in the first edition have been corrected; on the other hand, some additional ones have now crept in. These are few in number, for the most part obvious, and generally minor, though someone has blundered badly on p. 330, where a line or more has been dropped from the text, leaving an awkward and ungrammatical hiatus.

But there are other features, unmentioned and unexplained in the introduction, that differentiate this edition from its predecessors. One involves the formal division of the novel. In all previous editions, the book is divided not only into nine chapters but into three parts, creating a structure in which the main action is framed with scenes representing a prologue and a conclusion. Presumably, this distinction does not occur in the typescript, but Hughes is silent on the matter. More conspicuously, the "Cast of Characters" is also missing. This seems unfortunate--and curious, since it appeared in the first edition and parts of it were even repeated on the dust-jackets of both American and English versions. Similar lists of *dramatis personae*, helpfully annotated, had appeared or were about to appear in *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands*, *Owen Glendower*, and *Porius*. Unless there is good reason (which I doubt) to suppose that JCP neither compiled nor approved of this particular list, it seems a mistake to have omitted it. Certainly, I remember that I found all these aids useful when reading the novels for the first time. Its (presumed) absence from the Bissell transcript is not in itself an adequate excuse for omitting it from a self-styled "complete" edition. Once again, Hughes is silent. Readers encountering the novel for the first time in this edition will not know that such a list ever existed.

Another small detail is worth mentioning here, since it leads on to a bibliographical point of some interest. English editions of *Maiden Castle* (the Cassell edition of 1937 and the Macdonald reprint of 1966) contain a dedication: "Dedicated with affection and admiration to my sister Philippa." This does not appear in the Simon and Schuster edition and was evidently added later. But the words are unquestionably JCP's own, and once again any "complete" edition should surely contain them. I mention this because Hughes not only ignores the matter but in fact ignores the 1937 English edition so far as textual matters are concerned. Doubtless it has no textual authority, but it is of considerable interest to readers of JCP. My own cursory comparison of the 1936 and 1937 texts reveals that a number of *additional* cuts were made when the American

sheets were adapted for an English readership. This fact is not, I believe, generally known. The motives for these cuts can only be guessed at, but for the most part they appear to arise from puritanical or theological concerns. One involves a reference to Wizzie's breasts, another to Dud's leaving a fly-button unfastened, another to Urien's offensive love-making; those with a theological slant include a rather enigmatic allusion to the Virgin Birth and a report of Wizzie's being assured at her convent that it was possible to conceive by merely looking at a man! Admittedly, all this has little to do with Hughes's edition, but it does seem to me a pity that he didn't share with his readers all that he obviously knows about *Maiden Castle*'s extraordinary textual history.

Readers who take the trouble to compare Hughes's text with the 1936 edition will note various other differences. He brings a welcome expertise to the Welsh material in the book. The mangled epigraph is corrected, Urien's name is restored to its proper form (used by JCP and following the practice of Sir John Rhŷs), and other Welsh names are for the first time presented consistently. All this is admirable. In the further interests of consistency (not one of JCP's virtues!), he goes beyond the Bissell typescript to produce a clean text. Thus here Aaron Smith (Dud's stepfather) remains Aaron throughout, though JCP had absentmindedly switched to Elijah half-way. JCP's spellings of local place-names also vary from chapter to chapter, and Hughes performs the proper services of a copy editor in bringing order to bear. (But where does one stop? Why doesn't he correct the references to Hardy's mayor of Casterbridge from "Trenchard" to "Henchard" (pp. 255-56)? In addition, there is no way of bringing consistency to JCP's erratic use of the calendar.)

Hughes is also a bold editor when it comes to such matters as punctuation and paragraphing. He notes that JCP was content to leave the niceties of punctuation to others and that the "haphazard" paragraphing (p. xv) in both first edition and typescript was probably the work of his typist. Hughes has taken upon himself to regularize both in accordance with contemporary practice, and this seems to me a legitimate procedure. However, there are other typographical conventions where alteration can create a surprising change of tone. These include such matters as capitalization, italics, inverted commas, and the inclusion of quotations within quotation marks. Here there are often considerable differences between Hughes's text and earlier editions. Thus the generally capitalized "Scummy Pond" (in the 1936 text) carries a symbolic force that its lower-case equivalents lack, and the same can be said for "the Abyss" rather than "the abyss" and numerous other examples. Often, words that are pointed by being enclosed in inverted commas in 1936 occur in conventional type here; some quotations or near-quotations--e.g., Keats's "haggard knight-at-arms" (1936 ed., p. 63; here, p. 44)--lose their identifying quotation marks in the new text. I can only assume that Hughes is dutifully following the Bissell typescript here, but no specific reference is made to such details in the introduction.

I must apologise for the nit-picking character of the last few paragraphs. All the answers to my queries are doubtless to be found in Hughes's dissertation, to which he properly directs us. I have raised these matters, however, because I want to stress how even seemingly trivial details of editorial choice can have a palpable effect on the ways in which we respond to a text. Hughes may not have found the perfect solution—but I doubt if there *is* a perfect solution. It would be churlish indeed not to show deep gratitude for what he has given us. *Maiden Castle* has always been one of my favourite JCP novels, and I have often been surprised at the somewhat lukewarm praise it has earned from many of its eminent critics. Reading the unabridged text, I am even more convinced of its high quality. The "poor ragged Maiden" (JCP's witty phrase for his roughly handled novel) is now decked out in all her impressive finery. The goose-girl at last takes her bow as a true princess. Let us rejoice.

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ANNE BARBEAU GARDINER

T. F. Powys. *Father Adam*. Gringley-on-the-Hill, Doncaster, S. Yorks: Brynmill Press Ltd, 1990. Pp. 128. £ 8.40.

Theodore Francis Powys (1875-1953) finished *Father Adam* in 1919, but it was never published. The version printed here for the first time is the last and shortest of three, and it came just before a great outpouring of the author's printed work. *Father Adam* is a Pygmalion story about the creation of a new sort of person to save the human race. It is also a male Cinderella story about the discovery that what is most precious is after all what is ordinary.

Ralph Crew, who dies at the start of *Father Adam*, initiates the central action of the tale. He wants to reform the English masses whom he has seen as a hideous monster pushing and yelling at the Derby races. At first, using only a pre-Christian vocabulary that evokes the covenant of nature, Powys states that Crew wants to give the "gods" more concern for the world they made by reforming mankind. Crew seems pantheistic when he calls evolution the "mystic way of the return of God to Himself after He had become involved in matter." The way for god to return to Himself, or to the "mass of men," is for the Ten Commandments to be preached anew. People must be "driven back to Moses" and restrained before they can be saved. Initially, then, Crew wants someone to preach the Ten Commandments quite apart from love of the Judaeo-Christian God, because few of the English obey the "Commandments of the one God" they pretend to "worship."

To further his project, Ralph Crew finds an itinerant Irish preacher to be his "chosen disciple" and to reform mankind. This preacher was brought up in a "strict Catholic faith" but jettisoned that "orthodox" creed to preach to the English (p. 13). He is named Gabriel Adam, a name hinting at a combination of the angel and the man of earth. He is afterwards called "Father Adam" and "the Father," even from the time Ralph Crew sends him to college. The name "Father" evokes a Catholic priest in contrast to Henry Fielding's Parson Adam, who resembles Powys' Gabriel Adam but is more completely Protestant.

Father Adam is ordained in the Church of England and soon enters on a living in Honeyfield which Ralph Crew purchases at the end of his life. Honeyfield is a rather tainted Eden: its "embodiment" is the snake-eyed Jeremy Hinks, regarded as the "Socrates" of the village but in reality a loveless scandalmonger. The spiritual defeat of Hinks by Adam is the climax of this tale. Adam's rectory combines two pre-Christian aspects: the Ten Commandments written in gold are the only ornament permitted, suggesting iconoclasm, and two old servants, a nearly-blind nurse and a "primitive and uncorrupted" gardener (p. 19), keep the rectory immaculately clean inside and out, suggesting the silent presence of the Covenant of Nature beneath the Commandments. There is also a

Catholic aspect: Adam has vowed to Ralph Crew to go to private confession to Mr. Martin whenever he breaks a commandment.

Gabriel Adam, whose hero is Moses, sees God at first only in the transcendence of Sinai and refuses to see His immanence in Creation. Indeed, to him any hint of immanence is a temptation to idolatry. At one point he turns with vengeance on a lilac bush burning with divine beauty, and attacks it as Christ did the money changers. The inappropriate biblical reference underlines Adam's confusion: he thinks that to worship God's beauty in nature is equivalent to worshipping the god Mammon. As the tale unfolds, he learns to tell the difference. At first, however, when he sees a beautiful sleeping girl within an ancient stone circle and worships her for an hour, he believes he has committed idolatry. Her beauty, which appears to him the result of an "everlasting power of selection" and of an "art" millions of years old, seems to be a rival of God's loveliness rather than an embodiment of it (p. 28). Martin, his confessor, suggests that maybe God came down for an hour but doesn't convince Adam for long. Nevertheless, the more Adam struggles with his longing to worship a God that is "seen," the more vitality he has.

There is an odd counterbalance to Adam's iconoclasm: his belief in the intercession of saints and in the necessity for private confession. Adam believes he sees Ralph Crew, who is now in heaven, weeping for and smiling down at him, and even interceding with God for his forgiveness. He is also glad to have a confessor because it would be "too overpowering" to have his sin known only to the "pure mind of God" and have no mortal helping hand to the way of repentance (p. 33). Thus, at first he can accept embodiments of God's forgiveness, though not of God's beauty.

His confessor Martin, in counterpoint to Adam, worships the divine immanent in nature. He had once thought all humans to be merely conceited monkeys, but he had also feared he might become detached from nature if he lacked human love. When he met Ralph Crew, he first saw a "divine picture of nature at her best," of "nature saved from herself," a person who would "in time become himself a savior." Thus, Crew is for Martin an embodiment of the divine in nature and through this friendship, Martin catches a "blessing from the roots" and becomes more deeply attached to the earth he loves (p. 38).

Martin is the Pygmalion whose love brings Gabriel Adam out of his self-destructive iconoclasm. He helps him integrate his angelic and mortal sides, his worship of the God of Moses with his longing for a God-with-us. Having spent all his money on his ward's project of saving the world, Martin is reduced to living in a caravan on a heath near Honeyfield. There he finds a via media: he despises those who chase after money and status, but he also despises "the Yogi" who wish "to become the Absolute." He never loses his satiric perspective on the follies of mankind, reading Plutarch, Cervantes, and Ben Jonson in his hermitage, but, on the other hand, he gains a mystical vision, worshipping

daily something divine in the sun, earth, and stars, and even prays that the soul of his dead horse may find a heaven in a "star unknown." Having learned through his friendship with Ralph Crew that love is "possible," he teaches Adam that "love may be all" (pp. 99-100). In a sense, Martin is like the pessimistic Martin of Voltaire's *Candide*, but one brought to salvation through love.

It is Martin who makes Adam realize that personal fidelity is called for rather than perfect obedience to the Ten Commandments. Adam's hellfire sermons on the commandments are merely "noisy," Powys writes, in contrast to the quietude of his rectory where the two old representatives of nature keep a "holy shrine" for him. Ralph Crew, in his covenant with Adam, had insisted on celibacy, just as Jesus and St. Paul advised celibacy in the counsels of perfection. Crew had stated wryly that "no one ever listens to a married reformer" and that a "virgin mind" is needed to regenerate the world (p. 56). Reflecting the Anglican response to the counsels of perfection, however, Crew had added that if Adam were to marry, even though it would represent the defeat of his project to reform the masses, he should nevertheless go on as an ordinary clergyman. Powys wants us to see that in becoming ordinary, Adam becomes extraordinary. His life becomes tinged with a "brighter colour" and he takes on more holy strength as his love for Eva grows. That love allows him to defeat spiritually both Squire Robinson and Jeremy Hinks. The Squire, who is symbolized throughout by mud, oppresses the country folk and boasts how he and his fellow officers "won the war."

In contrast to Eva, the ordinary virtuous girl who, as Adam sees, has "her rightful being in the very center of God's blessed word," there is the courtesan of Honeyfield who treats sex "as a jest" (p. 71). She and her husband Parley set a trap for Adam but he succumbs only in the mind and only for a single "sinful moment" of combined adultery and idolatry. Curiously, the courtesan represents Mammon and makes common cause with Squire Robinson. Angry at what she sees as her failure to seduce Adam, she attacks the clergyman for his democratic behavior, for handing out "those bits of bread" at communion to the "common people" first, and for teaching those people to obey the commandments instead of their masters (p. 76).

Toward the conclusion of the book, Powys begins for the first time to allude to the New Testament, mentioning Easter and the "holy gospels" (p. 80). Adam sees the Ten commandments as no longer "so satisfying" and even takes down the golden letters and tramples them like an icon in a moment that seems to parallel the rending of the temple veil in Scripture. He compares himself to St. Peter who had denied Christ three times and judges himself "as being a Christian" (pp. 90-91).

Unlike Milton's Eve, Powys' Eva resembles Christ. It is she who is tempted by Squire Robinson as Christ was in the desert: he "carried her with him to the pinnacle of the temple of his money." On seeing him trying to seduce Eva, Adam feels not only the "rage of Moses" at the



Egyptian tormentor, but also the rage Adam would have felt if he had come upon Satan tempting Eve. At this point in the book Adam can distinguish iconoclasm from hatred of Mammon, because he wonders if the Ten Commandments and the Golden Calf were not somehow reconcilable, that is, the God of Sinai and an artistic statue or representation of the divine; and yet he also imagines himself at the Derby races with Ralph Crew and says he would have liked to break the heads of the worshippers of "the god Mammon" who were there (p. 84). His sense of the divine in Eva is unlike anything Milton would have permitted to Adam. It is more like Dante's love for Beatrice: Adam stands before Eva's cottage like a "child before the gates of Paradise" (p. 77).

*Father Adam* is a theological novel and will attract the sort of reader who would enjoy John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*. There is a transparent quality to the fiction: the theological debate is right below the surface. One senses also that there is quite a bit of self-revelation in the character of Martin. A good deal of the writing is prose-poetry, particularly chapter eight describing the age-old farmers at the village wall.

In this work T. F. Powys defends the Anglican High Church acceptance of religious statues and images, as well as accepting other embodiments of the divine presence in the world, even to the point of pantheism at times. He seems to rejoice that nineteenth-century Anglicanism left behind the iconoclastic practice of the eighteenth-century Church of England. Powys also defends marriage for the clergy without condemning celibacy as the Calvinists would have done, and his portrayal of Eva stands in stark contrast with Puritan Milton's. In *Father Adam*, T. F. Powys appears to be moving his Anglicanism away from Dissent, and toward a Christian Immanentism and Pan-entheism later connected to Teilhard de Chardin.

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

**PSNA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.** By a recent vote of the membership, the following individuals were elected to the Executive Committee of The Powys Society of North America, effective October 1, 1990:

President	Michael Ballin, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario
Vice President	Peter Powys Grey, New York
Executive Secretary	Richard Maxwell, Valparaiso University
Treasurer	Constance Harsh, Colgate University
Member at Large and Bibliographer	Charles Lock, Toronto University.

In keeping with the by-laws of the Society, the incoming Executive Secretary, Richard Maxwell, will also serve as Editor of *Powys Notes*. His address is Department of English, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383.

Departing the Executive Committee are Ben Jones (President) and Denis Lane (Executive Secretary), both of whom wish to express their appreciation to all those who have supported the Society during its formative years.

**JEFFREY KWINTNER** writes: "Just a note to tell you that the 1931 *Diary* of John Cowper Powys is now available. Published price is £39.50, but for Society members it's £28.50, plus £2.50 for overseas post and packaging. Please make payment in sterling." Jeffrey Kwintner Books, 12 Venetian House, Warrington Crescent, Little Venice, London W9 1EJ.

**ARND BOHM** writes: "My eye was caught lately by a couple of stray pages on *Porius*--the kind of thing which might be mentioned to interested scholars, lest it be lost. The volume is R. J. Stewart, ed., *The Book of Merlin: Insights from the First Merlin Conference, 1986* (Poole/New York: Blandford Press, 1987), "Merlin in Modern Fiction," 81-106, on *Porius*, 92-94. Generally, the book has some useful bibliography, albeit a mixture of serious stuff with loony fringe."

**VISITING FELLOWSHIPS**, *The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*, Yale University, 1991-1992. For visiting scholars pursuing post-doctoral or equivalent research in its collections. Fellowships support travel to and from New Haven and pay a living allowance of \$1,500 per month. All application materials must be received by January 15, 1991. Address: P.O. Box 1603A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520. [Holdings at Yale include 632 letters from John Cowper Powys to, among others, the following recipients: Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Davison Ficke (120), Alyse Gregory (375), James Purdy (60), and Dorothy Richardson (75).]